

Deep Dive: Vietnamese Lunar New Year



Did You Know?

While certain customs are similar across Asian Lunar New Year celebrations, there are quite a few important differences leading up to Tết Nguyên Đán—the "feast for the first morning" of the new year. We've highlighted a few unique traditions on this one-pager.



Dive Deeper: Traditions & Symbols

Giao thừa — New Year's Eve is the moment when one of the twelve Highnesses in Heaven welcomes in a new leader.

Mâm ngũ quả — The "five-fruit tray" symbolizes admiration and gratitude to Heaven and Earth for one's own ancestors.

Dào, mai, quất — Peach, apricot, and kumquat blossoms are often arranged for Tết.

Cây nêu — A very tall bamboo plant decorated with flowers, origami fish, and good luck charms to ward off evil spirits.

Lì xì — Lucky money often given in a red envelope to children.



Visit teachaapi.org/blog for recipes.

Dive Deeper: Food

Northern Vietnamese bánh chưng is square-shaped while Southern Vietnamese bánh tét is round. Both are sticky rice with mung beans and pork wrapped in banana leaves symbolizing gratitude to the ancestors, earth, and sky.

While shrimp represents vitality in China, shrimp is bad luck to eat on LNY in Vietnam because it represents moving backwards.

Dive Deeper: Dress

The áo dài is a traditional dress worn during special occasions. It consists of a long silk tunic with slits on the sides worn over pants.

Happy New Year!

Chúc mừng năm mới

Deep Dive: Korean Lunar New Year

Did You Know?

Although certain customs are similar across Asian Lunar New Year celebrations, there are quite a few important differences leading up to 날— Seollal, which is Lunar New Year's Day. Solar New Year 신정—Sinjeong— is typically celebrated with friends while 설날— Seollal is with family.



떡국 — Tteokguk is a rice cake soup that represents piety and dignity in the new year. One becomes one year older by eating a bowl of tteokguk on the morning of Seollal. Visit teachaapi.org/blog for recipes.

Dive Deeper: Traditions & Symbols

차례 – Charye is a ceremony to pay tribute to one's ancestors and invite them to enjoy ritual food from the charye table. Family members make two full bows on their knees then a half-standing bow while offering prayers to their ancestors.

세배 – Sebae is the New Year's bow young family members perform while presenting gifts to elders in exchange for good health, fortune, and 세뱃돈 – sebaedon, New Year's money given in a white envelope or 복주머니 – bokjumeoni, a silk or cotton drawstring pouch.

Dive Deeper: Clothing & Rituals

On Seollal's Eve shoes are hidden because of ghosts that bestow bad luck on people for the whole year by stealing people's shoes.

On Seollal morning, Koreans put on new 한복 — Hanbok consisting of a blouse shirt or jacket and a full wrap-around skirt for women and trousers for men in bold, bright colors symbolizing a bright future ahead.

Happy New Year!

새해 복 많이 받으십시오

saehae bok mani badeusipsio

Deep Dive: Chinese Lunar New Year

Did You Know?

There are quite a few uniquely Chinese traditions in celebrating Lunar New Year (or 春节 chūnjié – Spring Festival). The Chinese Zodiac gives each year an animal sign.



Visit our blog teachaapi.org/blog for recipes on how to make special lucky dumplings and more.

Dive Deeper: Clothing & Food

Buying new clothes for the new year is one of the oldest Spring Festival traditions. Wearing unlucky black or white clothes and washing clothes on LNY is taboo. In South China, buying and wearing new shoes is also taboo. Wearing red 旗袍 – qípáo (Cantonese cheongsam) and Tang or Zhongshan suits is lucky.

Word puns and the shape of foods influence food symbolism for LNY:

- 饺子 jiǎozi – dumplings look like silver ingots and are eaten for wealth.
- 鱼 yú – fish is eaten for prosperity
- 汤圆 tāngyuán – sweet rice balls are eaten for family togetherness.

Dive Deeper: Traditions & Myths

红包 – hóngbāo in Mandarin or Lai See in Cantonese refers to red envelopes containing lucky money. This tradition keeps sleeping children safe from the New Year's Eve demon Sui. The envelopes are also called 压岁钱 – yāsui qián or "suppressing ghost money."

福到了 – fú dào le in Mandarin means "fortune has come". Change your tone slightly when saying the Mandarin word 'arrive' and you end up saying 'upside-down'. So, if you place the word 'fortune' upside down during Lunar New Year, fortune will arrive.



Wishing you prosperity!

恭喜发财!

Mandarin: Gōngxǐ Fācái!

Cantonese: Kung Hei Fat Choi!

Deep Dive: Malaysian Lunar New Year

Did You Know?

While Lunar New Year is celebrated in Malaysia, there are quite a few uniquely Malaysian customs. Additionally, every thirty-three years, Malaysia recognizes Kongsi Raya or Gongxi Raya; this Malaysian portmanteu denotes the Lunar New Year and the Muslim Hari Raya Aidilfitri (Eid ul-Fitr) festivals occurring simultaneously.

Dive Deeper: Traditions

红包 – hóngbāo in Mandarin or I aisee in Cantonese is known as âng-pau, literally “red packet”, in Hokkien. Lucky money is given to children or unmarried relatives.

魚生 – Yee Sang, commonly known as “Prosperity Salad”, consists of raw fish, carrots, daikon, pickled ginger, peanuts, pillow crackers, and more. The dish is then assembled on a plate for the 撈起 — lou hei, or “prosperity toss” which is a uniquely Malaysian tradition of mixing the salad by trying to see who can toss the salad higher with chopsticks.



Nyonya Pineapple Tarts popularized by the Chinese Diaspora (in Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Brunei, Indonesia, etc.) symbolize bring sweet life and good fortune into the new year. Pineapple in Hokkien is ong lai — literally, “prosperity has arrived”

Dive Deeper: Food & Symbolism

Murukku has Indian rather than Chinese origins, but they highlight the multiculturalism of Malaysia are non-negotiable for a truly Malaysian Lunar New Year.



Happy New Year!

Keong Hee Huat Chai in Hokkien
Selamat Tahun Baru in Malay